

# A.P. Language and Composition

## Rhetorical Terms & Glossary

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| <b>Abstract</b>      | refers to language that describes concepts rather than concrete images ( ideas and qualities rather than observable or specific things, people, or places). The observable or "physical" is usually described in concrete language.  |
| <b>Ad Hominem</b>    | In an argument, this is an attack on the person rather than on the opponent's ideas. It comes from the Latin meaning "against the man."  |
| <b>Allegory</b>      | an extended narrative in prose or verse in which characters, events, and settings represent abstract qualities and in which the writer intends a second meaning to be read beneath the surface of the story; the underlying meaning may be moral, religious, political, social, or satiric.  |
| <b>Alliteration</b>  | repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words that are close to one another: Mickey Mouse; Donald Duck  |
| <b>Allusion</b>      | a reference to a well-known person, place, or thing from literature, history, etc. Example: Eden   |
| <b>Analogy</b>       | Comparison of two similar but different things, usually to clarify an action or a relationship, such as comparing the work of a heart to that of a pump. An analogy is a comparison to a directly parallel case.   |
| <b>Anaphora</b>      | Repetition of a word, phrase, or clause at the beginning of two or more sentences in a row. This is a deliberate form of repetition and helps make the writer's point more coherent. (Example: "There was the delight I caught in seeing long straight rows. There was the faint, cool kiss of sensuality. There was the vague sense of the infinite....") |
| <b>Anecdote</b>      | a short, simple narrative of an incident; often used for humorous effect or to make a point.   |
| <b>Annotation</b>    | Explanatory notes added to a text to explain, cite sources, or give bibliographical data.  |
| <b>Antithesis</b>    | the presentation of two contrasting images. The ideas are balanced by word, phrase, clause, or paragraphs. "To be or not to be..." "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country...."  |
| <b>Aphorism</b>      | a short, often witty statement of a principle or a truth about life: "Early bird gets the worm."   |
| <b>Apostrophe</b>    | usually in poetry but sometimes in prose; the device of calling out to an imaginary, dead, or absent person or to a place, thing, or personified abstraction   |
| <b>Argumentation</b> | writing that attempts to prove the validity of a point of view or an idea by presenting reasoned arguments; persuasive writing is a form of argumentation  |
| <b>Assonance</b>     | repetition of vowel sounds between different consonants, such as in neigh/fade   |
| <b>Asyndeton</b>     | Commas used (with no conjunction) to separate a series of words. The parts are emphasized equally when the conjunction is omitted; in addition, the use of commas with no intervening conjunction speeds up the flow of the sentence. Asyndeton takes the form of X, Y, Z as opposed to X, Y, and Z.   |
| <b>Cacophony</b>     | harsh, awkward, or dissonant sounds used deliberately in poetry or prose; the opposite of euphony.   |
| <b>Caricature</b>    | descriptive writing that greatly exaggerates a specific feature of a person's appearance or a faced of personality.  |
| <b>Colloquialism</b> | a word or phrase (including slang) used in everyday conversation and informal writing but that is often inappropriate in formal writing (y'all, ain't)   |

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| <b>Coherence</b>         | quality of a piece of writing in which all the parts contribute to the development of the central idea, theme, or organizing principle  |
| <b>Concrete Language</b> | Language that describes specific, observable things, people, or places, rather than ideas or qualities.   |
| <b>Connotation</b>       | implied or suggested meaning of a word because of its association in the reader's mind.   |
| <b>Consonance</b>        | repetition of identical consonant sounds within two or more words in close proximity, as in boost/best; it can also be seen within several compound words, such as fulfill and ping-pong  |
| <b>Conundrum</b>         | a riddle whose answer is or involves a pun; it may also be a paradox or difficult problem   |
| <b>Deduction</b>         | the process of moving from a general rule to a specific example   |
| <b>Denotation</b>        | literal meaning of a word as defined  |
| <b>Description</b>       | the picturing in words of something or someone through detailed observation of color, motion, sound, taste, smell, and touch; one of the four modes of discourse  |
| <b>Diction</b>           | word choice, an element of style; Diction creates tone, attitude, and style, as well as meaning. Different types and arrangements of words have significant effects on meaning. An essay written in academic diction would be much less colorful, but perhaps more precise than street slang.   |
| <b>Didactic</b>          | writing whose purpose is to instruct or to teach. A didactic work is usually formal and focuses on moral or ethical concerns. Didactic writing may be fiction or nonfiction that teaches a specific lesson or moral or provides a model of correct behavior or thinking.  |
| <b>Discourse</b>         | spoken or written language, including literary works; the four traditionally classified modes of discourse are description, exposition, narration, and persuasion.  |
| <b>Dissonance</b>        | harsh or grating sounds that do not go together   |
| <b>Dramatic Irony</b>    | When the reader is aware of an inconsistency between a fictional or nonfictional character's perception of a situation and the truth of that situation.   |
| <b>Emotional Appeal</b>  | When a writer appeals to readers' emotions (often through pathos) to excite and involve them in the argument.   |
| <b>Epigraph</b>          | the use of a quotation at the beginning of a work that hints at its theme. Hemingway begins <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> with two epigraphs. One of them is "You are all a lost generation" by Gertrude Stein.   |
| <b>Ethical Appeal</b>    | When a writer tries to persuade the audience to respect and believe him or her based on a presentation of image of self through the text. Reputation is sometimes a factor in ethical appeal, but in all cases the aim is to gain the audience's confidence.  |
| <b>Euphemism</b>         | a more acceptable and usually more pleasant way of saying something that might be inappropriate or uncomfortable. "He went to his final reward" is a common euphemism for "he died." Euphemisms are also often used to obscure the reality of a situation. The military uses "collateral damage" to indicate civilian deaths in a military operation. |
| <b>Euphony</b>           | a succession of harmonious sounds used in poetry or prose; the opposite of cacophony  |
| <b>Example</b>           | An individual instance taken to be representative of a general pattern. Arguing by example is considered reliable if examples are demonstrable true or factual as well as relevant.   |
| <b>Explication</b>       | The art of interpreting or discovering the meaning of a text. Explication usually involves close reading and special attention to figurative language.  |
| <b>Exposition</b>        | the immediate revelation to the audience of the setting and other background information necessary for understanding the plot; also, explanation; one of the four modes of discourse  |